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this orientation of the spirit for the sake of the preservation of identity, will always operate—it will never be lacking to art, however much it may be lacking to all life outside art. What is significant, then, in the work of men like Vachel Lindsay, Carl Sandburg, Edgar Lee Masters and Sherwood Anderson, as well as other poets that one could name, is this sense of identity with their own country-side, their own city's streets, and with the past, present and future of "Mid-America." It is from this kind of thing that national art springs. Yet the work of these men is widely divergent—another hopeful sign of vitality and fertility. One may accept one and reject another; yet they are all, one must admit, expressively "Mid-American."

The reader will no doubt be repelled as well as attracted by many of these songs. That too is one source of their strength, of their expressiveness. No one poet will tell the whole story. Both Synge and Yeats reveal the soul of Ireland.

A. C. H.

FAR-WESTERN VERSE

Out Where the West Begins, by Arthur Chapman. Houghton Mifflin Co.

Riders of the Stars, and *Songs of the Outlands*, by Henry Herbert Knibbs, Houghton Mifflin Co.

Sun and Saddle Leather, and *Grass-grown Trails*, by Badger Clark. Richard G. Badger.

Boundaries have changed since Eugene Field published his poems in Chicago under the title of *A Little Book of*

Western Verse. Chicago is still the West for those who live there or on the Atlantic sea-coast, but for anyone living beyond the Rockies Chicago is part of the East. The books of verse which head this review are of the Far West, that God-forsaken country of whose value Daniel Webster had such slight opinion. Bret Harte, of course, opened up the West, poetically speaking. But his was the West of the gold-fevered easterners, who came in a flurry and stayed to repent, or to grow rich, as the case might be. Since that time not only the Pacific coast lands, but the far inland desert ranges, hills, pastures and purple mountains have been peopled by a new race of men, who have grown up with the land and have learned to love it in a way that an easterner sometimes finds hard to understand.

This note is struck in the familiar cowboy song:

Oh, give me a home where the buffalo roam
And the deer and the antelope play,
Where seldom is heard a discouraging word,
And the skies are not cloudy all day!

And the reader must be prepared to find it in the work of more sophisticated western poets.

It is this sentiment, in fact, which insures the popularity of Arthur Chapman's title poem, *Out Where the West Begins*—a poem with good lines in it, but whose chief merit is that it expresses a popular sentiment. The other poems in the book exhibit various aspects of western life with varying degrees of success. Mr. Chapman's worst failing is a tendency to mix colloquialisms. When a cow-puncher says "old top," or a sheep-herder says that his sheep are

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"drinkin' their bloomin' fill," you know that they have got store clothes on. And there is also much of the pseudo-poetic in his phrasing: "yon mesa," for instance, or "where gleams yon gaunt peak's snowy hood."

Mr. Chapman is at his best in poems not in the colloquial manner—*Before the Gringo Came*, *Out Among the Big Things*, *At the Outposts*, or *In a Deserted Mining Camp* (in spite of such rhyme-words as "steed" and "mart"). *The Sheriff's Report*, however, with its laconic note of duty done—"We just went out to git him, and we did"—is perhaps the best poem in the volume.

I don't know why one who writes about western things should adopt a quasi-bantering tone about nature and a colloquialism that comes far more from the echoes of Service or Kipling than from the plains or desert. It is a theatricality that is put on as easily as grease paint or a wig, but is quite as obviously detected.

In suggesting that he is "the Service of Arizona," or words to that effect, the publishers of Henry Herbert Knibbs' two books have done the author an injustice. Three years ago, in reviewing *Songs of the Outlands*, POETRY called these poems "the best verse of its kind written in this century, or perhaps since Bret Harte himself." Mr. Knibbs is much better than Service. His vocabulary is his own, or rather the western vocabulary is his own; and his verse has genuine musical quality which is not borrowed either. Mr. Knibbs is particularly good in the dramatic lyric, such as *The Shallows of the Ford* or *The Walking*

Man or *The Mule Skinner*. These and others of his poems are western ballads, most appreciated, it may be, by those who know the life he celebrates, even as Irish folk-song may be most at home in Ireland. The stuff his verse is made of is indigenous. I like particularly that bit of a song called *Eh, Johnny-Jo* which expresses his attitude towards his work:

*The wind of dawn has swept the plains,
And the sun runs over the purple sage.
Gone is the rack of the winter rains,
Leaving the hill like a faery page
Of a book that is old, but is ever new,
And fresh as the wild-flowers sweet with dew . . .
Gosh! I'm ridin' close to the fence and low,
And strainin' my buttins, eh, Johnny-Jo?*

It ain't no use for to talk like that;
It's second-hand scenery made to print.
Just hand me my ole gray puncher hat
And them spurs and quirt; do you get the hint?
For I got to ride easy with elbows high,
Mebby not style, but she sure has go;
We'll all git to Heaven by-and-by,
But we'll travel outdoors; eh, Johnny-Jo?

Mr. John Butler Yeats in his letters says there are no "solitaries" in America; but the "solitary" does not stand on a street corner in New York and proclaim himself.

Shall I leave the hills, the high, far hills that shadow the morning
plain?
Shall I leave the desert sand and sage that gleams in the winter rain?
Shall I leave the ragged bridle-trail to ride in the city street—
To snatch a song from the printed word, or sit at a master's feet?

To barter the sting of the mountain wind for the choking fog and
smoke?

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To barter the song of the mountain stream for the babble of city folk?

To lose my grip on the god I know and fumble among the creeds?
O rocks and pines of the high, far hills, hear the lisp of the valley reeds!

There is a touch of the romantic in Mr. Knibbs' work which distinguishes him from other writers of western verse. One finds it in *Oliver West*, in *The Last of Cavaliers*, in *Overland the Red* and other poems, and it rises to the genuinely poetic in *The Far and Lonely Hill*. I'd like to quote from these and others, from the poems about horses and dogs, from *The Glorious Fool*, and particularly from the song about the cowboys in heaven—an idea that one meets often enough in cowboy songs, but one which has seldom been given with so much humor and swing as in *Sunshine Over Yuma*:

Come, my little cayuse and lope along, lope along—
Guess we got in wrong, somehow.
Don't exactly fancy just the way the folks are starin';
Can't exactly cotton to the funny clothes they're wearin';
Oh it's Heaven, but it's lonely, and we've had our little airin',
So we'll fan it back to Arizona now.

But the reader may be left to make his own selection.

If we call Mr. Knibbs a romanticist, perhaps we may say that Mr. Badger Clark, author of *High Chin Bob*, is a realist—that is, if the words may be taken not as a means of hard and fast classification but as denoting merely a slight distinction. In the title *Sun and Saddle Leather* one recognizes at once something of Mr. Clark's quality, something of that same quality that made *High Chin Bob*, or *The Glory Trail* as it is called in this book, so simple, con-

crete and explicit. Curiously enough, though we pointed out improvements made upon that poem by the cowboys, there is not another poem in the book that is not in the natural order of speech, and a part of the power of this author comes from that fact. And *High Chin Bob*, as I like to call it, is not by any means the only good poem in this book. There are poems certain to please not only the old "cow-men," but the most arrant tenderfoot who has never worn chaps or spurs; and poems such as *The Cowboy's Prayer* or *The Christmas Trail* are as good as Riley. Here are the first and last stanzas of the latter:

The wind is blowin' cold down the mountain tips of snow
And cross the ranges layin' brown and dead;
It's cryin' through the valley trees that wear the mistletoe
And mournin' with the gray clouds overhead.
Yet it's sweet with the beat of my little hawse's feet
And I whistle like the air was warm and blue;
For I'm ridin' up the Christmas trail to you,
Old Folks,
I'm a-ridin' up the Christmas trail to you.

The coyote's winter howl cuts the dusk behind the hill,
But the ranch's shinin' window I kin see;
And though I don't deserve it, and I reckon never will,
There'll be room beside the fire kep' for me.
Simp my plate 'cause I'm late. Let me hit the old kid gait,
For tonight I'm stumblin' tired of the new.
And I'm ridin' up the Christmas trail to you,
Old Folks,
I'm a-ridin' up the Christmas trail to you.

In *God's Reserves*, *The Plainsmen* and *The Westerner* Mr. Clark proves that he writes straightforward verse as well as the colloquial, while many songs in the latter vein

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have the same kind of good fun that we find in *High Chin Bob*. This is not, by the way, the only song of Mr. Clark's that the cowboys have appropriated. Mr. Lomax has a cowboy version of *Ridin'*, the first poem in this book; and when I read *A Border Affair* I recognized it as a song that I had heard sung by Orville Cox, a cowboy from Taos, New Mexico. Apparently, when the cowboys find a song they like they fit it to music that they know already or make up, adding unique phrases and quavers and cowboy yells of their own.

Grass-grown Trails, which is just out, does not tempt me away from the earlier volume. Perhaps its author is becoming too civilized.

I have said that Mr. Clark proves himself an equal of James Whitcomb Riley, and I don't know that any further appreciation is necessary, unless it be in the words of an old "cow-man": "You can break me if there's a dead poem in it. I read the hull twenty-two—I don't know how Clark knowed, but he *knows!*" And Mr. Clark knows, too, that love of the West of which I spoke in the beginning:

When the last free trail is a prim, fenced land,
And our graves grow weeds through forgetful Mays,
Richer and statelier then you'll reign,
Mother of men whom the world will praise.
And your sons will love you and sigh for you,
Labor and battle and die for you,
But never the fondest will understand
The way we have loved you, young, young land!

A. C. H.